

Understanding and Embracing Plateaus in QigongDharma Practice

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The Nature of Plateaus in Practice

In the journey of learning and embodying QigongDharma, we traverse many layers, levels, and dimensions of experience. An essential insight on this path is recognizing and understanding plateaus—periods where progress seems to stall despite continued effort. During these phases, familiar movements, meditations, and energetic experiences may not appear to deepen or change significantly.

A plateau is not an obstacle to overcome but an integral and necessary phase of development. Rather than signifying stagnation, a plateau represents a period of stabilization where previous breakthroughs are refined and integrated into one's body-mind system. Insights and transformations in QigongDharma do not follow a linear path but unfold in natural rhythms—expansion and contraction, deepening and consolidating, movement and stillness. When embraced, these rhythms reveal a greater intelligence at work within the practice itself.

The Hidden Dimension: Integration and Somatic Insight

Plateaus serve as the time-space continuum for integration. As your practice develops, you gain direct somatic insight—knowing through intuitive feeling and experiencing wisdom within the body itself. Accompanying this somatic insight is the necessary time required to integrate this specific type of knowledge with the nervous system and the entire organism.

Each new realization or refinement requires time for the nervous system, energetic body, and consciousness to adapt, align, and stabilize. This is especially true in practices that involve energetic refinement, internal harmonization, and deep structural-developmental shifts. This integration period is not passive; rather, it is an active reorganization of the entire being—physically, energetically, emotionally, and mentally. Although it is active, it may be occurring at subconscious levels of our being.

Still Waters Run Deep: The Invisible Progress

One of the most overlooked aspects of plateaus is the invisible progress happening beneath the surface. While externally, nothing seems to change, the body-mind system engages in the following:

- **Cellular Intelligence & Fascia Adaptation:** At physiological and energetic levels, tissues, fascia, and internal structures subtly adapt to new alignments that may not be immediately perceptible.
- **Subconscious Learning Processes:** Skill acquisition often occurs below the level of conscious awareness, explaining why sudden breakthroughs may emerge after long periods of perceived stagnation.

Have faith that significant changes are happening, even if they aren't immediately visible—they are similar to a seed growing underground before any noticeable sprouting appears.

The Wisdom of Underdoing

In QigongDharma, a key principle is learning the value of "underdoing." This approach contrasts with forcing progress or chasing results. Instead, underdoing emphasizes allowing the practice to settle deeply into and through the body's intelligence. The most profound transformations often occur in the stillness and ease between effort and release.

Having more techniques, knowledge, and forms doesn't necessarily lead to better qigong or practice results. By diving deep into the simplicity of each element and embodying each principle, we uncover the true value of practice.

This aligns with the Daoist principle of Wu Wei (無為)—effortless action that emerges from harmony rather than forceful striving.



The Yin-Yang Cycle of Practice Development

Rather than seeing plateaus as "stuck points," they can be understood through the lens of natural cycles—specifically, the interplay of Yin and Yang:

- **Yang Phases** (Expansion & Breakthroughs): Times of visible progress, dynamic shifts, and tangible deepening.
- **Yin Phases** (Plateaus & Consolidation): Periods of absorption, internalization, and energetic stabilization.

Just as in nature, seasons of rapid growth require seasons of stillness for sustainability. Attempting to force progress during a Yin phase can create energetic disharmony and lead to frustration, strain, or injury. The wisdom lies in learning to align with these natural cycles, seeing plateaus as necessary phases of deepening rather than stagnation.

The Psychological and Energetic Dimensions of Plateaus

Beyond the physical aspects, plateaus carry profound psychological significance. They test our patience, dedication, and capacity for equanimity. During these phases, doubt may arise—doubt in one's abilities, in the effectiveness of the practice, or in the possibility of further growth. This is where the true practice begins—not in external progress but in the cultivation of inner steadiness.

Emotional Challenges During Plateaus

It is natural to encounter emotional turbulence during plateaus, such as frustration, doubt, or restlessness. These reactions may result from:

- **Attachment to Progress:** The mind craves measurable improvement, making stillness feel unsettling.
- **Energetic "Detoxification":** Plateaus sometimes indicate deeper energetic layers surfacing—unresolved patterns or subtle blockages that need time to clear.

Meeting plateaus with curiosity rather than frustration allows us to explore what arises within them—be it impatience, fear, or attachment to achievement. This exploration is part of clearing the pathway to deeper insight and realization.

Different Types of Plateaus: Recognizing the Patterns

Not all plateaus are the same. Identifying which type you're experiencing can help you navigate it skillfully:

- **Physical Plateaus:** Feeling stuck in terms of physical strength, flexibility, or coordination often calls for greater internal awareness instead of just pushing harder.
- **Energetic Plateaus:** The feeling that qi is not flowing as it once did invites focusing on refining the perception of subtler nuances and movements.
- **Mental/Emotional Plateaus:** Losing motivation or feeling disengaged from practice serves as an invitation to explore new aspects of QigongDharma, integrate contemplative elements, or shift focus to effortless presence.
- **Spiritual Plateaus:** A sense of spiritual stagnation often indicates a shift toward deeper wisdom instead of a lack of progress.

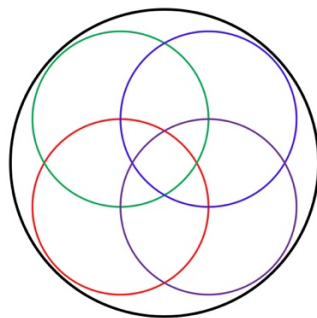
Learning to identify which type of plateau you face allows you to respond with the appropriate approach instead of forcing movement in the wrong direction.

The Paradox of Progress: Regression as Integration

A powerful yet often misunderstood phenomenon in practice is experiencing regression after a major breakthrough—what may seem like "losing progress" when, in reality, it is potentially a deeper integration.

After moments of great expansion in practice, the nervous system and energetic body recalibrate by temporarily reverting to an earlier stage. This allows us to revisit foundational aspects with a new level of awareness, deepening our understanding rather than merely moving beyond them.

What appears as regression may, in fact, be a normal, necessary, and integral part of our developmental process—not a setback but an opportunity to reaffirm, refine, and stabilize prior learning at a more embodied level.



Plateaus as Gateways to Subtler Awareness

In advanced practice, plateaus indicate a transition to finer and more subtle awareness. Early on, progress may feel more tangible—greater physical relaxation, increased energy flow, and a sense of vitality. Over time, as external markers of progress become less pronounced, the refinement advances inward.

What appears to be a plateau may actually be an invitation to perceive more deeply—to notice subtler qualities of qi movement, breath, mind, and presence. We learn to sense not only what is happening but also what is absent, what is hidden within stillness, and what is unfolding beneath the surface.

Essential Qualities for Navigating Plateaus

Three key qualities support practitioners through plateau phases:

- **Tolerance:** The capacity to stay present and open even when no immediate progress is evident. This prevents frustration and resistance, allowing integration to unfold naturally. The "tolerance of stillness" becomes a practice in itself.
- **Perseverance:** Continued practice without attachment to results fosters a deepening of commitment and maturity. This is not blind persistence but an intelligent and skillful perseverance grounded in trust.
- **Simplicity and Depth:** Returning again and again to the essential foundations of practice with fresh awareness reveals the true gold of QigongDharma.

The Art of Letting Go to Move Forward

A counterintuitive yet essential lesson in dealing with plateaus is learning to let go instead of pushing through. Often, breakthroughs arise not from more effort but from surrendering expectations.

The breath itself offers a model: one must fully exhale before the next inhale naturally arises. Similarly, in practice, there are moments to release striving, let the mind settle, and trust the process—allowing the next wave of progress to emerge organically.

Plateaus as Mirrors for Life Itself

Finally, plateaus in QigongDharma mirror the plateaus encountered in personal growth, relationships, and creativity. They teach patience, trust, and the ability to stay present without immediate reward.

Just as in practice, life's greatest transformations often happen in the spaces between visible change. The ability to remain steady in uncertainty, to trust the unseen, and to cultivate inner resilience extends beyond Qigong and into all aspects of being.

QigongDharma is a living practice, and its lessons extend far beyond the mat. How one navigates a plateau in practice reflects how one meets challenges in life.

From "Enduring" to "Embracing" Plateaus

By embracing plateaus with patience, awareness, and insight, we cultivate a depth of wisdom that goes beyond technique—entering into a state of harmony with the very essence of practice itself. Plateaus are not interruptions in the journey of QigongDharma practice; they are the journey itself. They are where growth is quietly solidified, where wisdom deepens, and where practitioners learn the art of being present without attachment.

When fully understood, plateaus transform our perceived obstacles into gateways—revealing the profound intelligence embedded within both the practice and the practitioner.

QIGONG DHARMA

